

Central Control or Parallel Evolution Samurai Landholding in Tokugawa Japan

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Introduction

It has long been a central tenant of Tokugawa history that samurai fiefs “effectively” became defunct during the 17th century. This typically is understood (in the English-language literature) as reflecting a tightening of “central control” over divisive tendencies throughout the Tokugawa polity and an important step in achieving political stability.

While it is undeniable that samurai fiefs underwent fundamental changes between the 16th and 17th centuries, it is an overstatement to say that these disappeared from the Tokugawa political structure. Fiefs granted as holdings in land are estimated to have existed in some 16% of all domains, accounting for some half of the kokudaka 石高 of the same.

Since the holders of the overwhelming majority of these fiefs did not hold full and independent rights of administration, jurisdiction and taxation, their existence has often been dismissed as “insignificant.” This approach tells us a lot about what the fief holders did not do: it tells us nothing about what they did do. Yet trying to move beyond this negative approach is difficult because we know so little about landed-fiefs in general, and what we do know does not lend itself to generalisation.

Notwithstanding how little we actually do know about landed-fiefs, there has been a change in emphasis in scholarship within the last decade. This has come about from a growing realisation among some scholars that despite landed-fiefs having been pronounced dead many times over, the institution did not disappear from the Tokugawa Polity, and moreover, that it continued to exercise a strong influence over the self-perceptions of samurai of this period.¹ This change in emphasis has yet to be accepted as the general consensus (the two “rising stars” of generalistic formulations about the Tokugawa Polity, Mizubayashi Takeshi 水林彪 and Kasaya Kazuhiko 笠谷和比古, despite the considerable difference in their approach to describing the Tokugawa Polity, agree that landed-fiefs are of no significance),² yet recent developments in research suggest that there is a need to take another look at

1) 例えば、山口啓二『鎖国と開国』（岩波書店、日本歴史叢書、1993年、114頁）、朝尾直弘「『公儀』と幕藩領主制」（歴史学研究会・日本史研究会編集『講座日本歴史』5 近世165、75頁）。

2) 近世武士の自律制を強く主張する笠谷は、その一方では、武士の自律性の基盤（あるいはそのもっとも原理的な表象）としての知行地についてまったく否定的である。このことは、笠谷の近世武士の理解には、1964年以降の藩政の中の地方知行についての研究が実質的に入っていないことから、彼自身の研究史の整理の仕方によるものである。笠谷は、水林の論が過度に上位権力の集権性を

landed-fiefs. Studies of the Tokugawa Polity have moved beyond an economic deterministic approach to take account of such matters as sources of legitimacy, the role of the status system in determining samurai behaviour, and to reconsider the earlier emphasis on the sole concentration of power in the hands of the upper echelons of society. These new approaches are all especially relevant to thinking about landed-fiefs.

This paper will move beyond particularistic studies of individual fief systems to draw together a typology of the variety between fief systems, and the points of convergence between the systems themselves and the logic informing these systems to see what light newer approaches in scholarship may have to shed upon our understanding of the samurai of the Tokugawa Period.

Landed-Fiefs: are they insignificant?

It has long been one of the central tenets of Tokugawa Period history that landed-fiefs (地方知行制) are insignificant. Put simply, the argument that landed-fiefs are insignificant for anything but perhaps the first 50 years or so of the Tokugawa period is based upon two sets of assertions.

The first set of assertions concerns the problem of how to define "insignificant." It is argued that even in those domains which did retain the system of landed-fiefs throughout the Tokugawa Period, the institution had become "fictionalised" (形骸化) by the mid c17th. The actual standard used to determine whether the fief system of any particular domain had become "fictionalised" or not varies from scholar to scholar. Apart from Sasaki Junnosuke's 佐々木潤之介 *gun'yaku ron* 軍役論 which assumed that the primary function of landed-fiefs was to serve as a vehicle for obtaining labour service from peasants for military service, most of the theories proposed for judging the degree of "fictionalisation" of landed-fiefs depend upon measuring the perceived "realities" of mid-Tokugawa Period landed-fiefs with some externally derived standard for defining "feudal lordship."

The standard most commonly applied is to see to what extent fief-holders held independent rights of taxation, administration and jurisdiction. These three "rights" represent respectively: the right to extract surplus product from the ruled as ground rent, control over the administrative apparatus necessary to maintain this on a long-term basis, and command of the power of non-violent coercion necessary to ensure that rent is duly paid. Together, these three rights effectively comprise the means of "extra-economic compulsion" (or "non-economic compulsion") of the classic Marxist model of feudalism as a system of economic exploitation through class relations. Leaving aside the question of whether one wishes to pursue a Marxist model or not, taken on its own terms, this standard has many problems.

First of all, it is tied into 19th century notions of "feudalism." In particular, it assumes that "feudalism" represented a state of either total anarchy (or something very close to this). This problem is related to another shortcoming of this model, i.e. that taken on its own terms, it confuses the necessary conditions for procuring surplus production with the actual process of procuring the same. These two problems are intertwined. Independent 強調するものであると批判するが、笠谷自身は、藩政研究もさることながら、佐々木潤之介などの集権論の論理的整理を極めて皮相的にしか行っていないため、笠谷の意図とは別に、結構「集権的」な論になっている。笠谷と水林の差異、および笠谷の藩政史研究の偏りを見るには、笠谷和比古「武士身分論」(村上直編『日本近世史研究辞典』東京堂出版、1989年)が手頃である。

rights of taxation, administration and jurisdiction are originally rights that belong to the State: if these rights were ever actually held fully by "independent feudal lords," then this would mean that an important part of State authority had effectively disintegrated to the point of extinction, leaving nothing but a condition of anarchy. Rather than accept the "all or nothing" approach implicit in the model presented, where State authority and the authority of "feudal lords" are diametrically opposed to each other, it is both more realistic and historical to assume a relationship between State authority and the authority of individual lords, where the relationship between the two is more symbiotic than oppositional. The rights of taxation, administration and jurisdiction are concerned with the maintenance of the overall social order and provide the framework within which individual lords collected surplus produce from their fiefs. Put more simply, the problem of how to actually collect the surplus produce on one's lands is a fundamentally different problem from such matters as how to catch, try and punish a person for theft, for example. It is highly questionable whether the model of feudalism implicit in this standard ever existed anywhere, but the historical bankruptcy of this model becomes clear when we apply it to the formation of the Tokugawa Polity.

Perhaps the single most dominant theme in research within Japan into the formation of the Tokugawa Polity over the past twenty years has been the focus on the grounds for the legitimacy of the national government and its acquisition of State powers. While there is considerable difference in the emphasis placed on the relative importance of the role of the social roots of legitimacy and its roots in pre-existing State organs, there is at least general agreement that legitimacy within the Tokugawa Polity did not come simply from the acquisition of lands and power by the various hegemons. If we no longer expect the national government of the Tokugawa State to create its own legitimacy out of nothing, then why should we expect lesser lords to exist within the artificial vacuum required by the definition of an "independent feudal lord" that has been applied to date?

The third problem with the aforementioned definition of "significant" rights of rule concerns the focus implicit within the definition on rule as being essentially coercive in nature. Few scholars today would depict the Tokugawa Polity as deriving its legitimacy solely from the coercive powers at its disposal. Yet the trinity of "full and independent rights of taxation, administration and jurisdiction" (as conceived within the original definition at least) is essentially a combination of nonviolent coercive forces and instruments thereof to acquire surplus production from the producer. Yet if the higher levels of authority within the Tokugawa Polity derived their legitimacy from sources other than their own innate powers of coercion, violent or otherwise, should not authority or rule at lower levels also be considered in terms other than the coercive powers available to lords at these levels? Earlier studies of landed-fiefs have made it clear that there was a significant decline in the powers available to fief-holders in the formative stages of the Tokugawa Polity, but these studies are less informative when it comes to questions concerning the possible sources of legitimacy of fief-holders and explanations relevant to those regions where the landed-fief system did not disappear..

If the definition of "significant" rights of rule for fief-holders is of questionable applicability, then the problem of how prevalent the system of granting landed-fiefs was within the Tokugawa Polity is also less clear than generally assumed. Despite the inherent unreliability of any "guestimate" of the number of Han retaining the system of granting landed-fiefs, there is no question that their number was small: a figure of less than 20%, quite possibly closer to 10%, is probably not too inaccurate. It is also clear that while the number of Han retaining this system was small overall, they were mostly the larger Han, and therefore accounted for a considerable portion of the Tokugawa

polity, possibly as much as half overall measured in terms of kokudaka.³ The main problem with this figure is not so much its inherent inaccuracy, but rather the problem of defining what constitutes a landed-fief system.

The single largest problem here is whether it is correct to limit the scope of the problem to that of Han. Scholars working on the Tokugawa Bakufu, both its political structure and matters related to local control on "Bakufu" lands, have always considered hatamoto fiefs to be "landed-fiefs," either subject to the same forces leading to their "fictionalisation" as in daimyo domains, or otherwise, depending on the individual scholar's stance. If one adds hatamoto to the category of landed-fiefs in general, then the figures given above for the prevalence of the system throughout the Tokugawa Polity lose a lot of their meaning, as the vast Tokugawa lands must thereby be added to the area wherein the landed-fief system prevailed. One of the more important results to be gained from this change in perspective is that it releases us from the sterile argument that landed-fiefs systems continued to exist only in the more peripheral and "backward" areas of Japan. Hatamoto fiefs existed not only throughout the Kanto Plain around Edo, but more importantly, in the "advanced" areas around Osaka as well.

Defining "landed-fiefs"

Landed-fiefs have figured prominently in explanations of the formation of the Tokugawa Polity, albeit it the sense that their demise, or the general restriction of the rights of rule of the fief-holders, has generally been taken to represent one of the major changes occurring in the formative stages of the Tokugawa Polity. Yet, notwithstanding the regularity to which it is referred to, no adequate definition of this institution exists. The very variety of the institution is part of the explanation for this state of affairs, but another aspect of this problem has been that the unrealistic definition of "significant rights of rule" applied so far has stifled attempts to move towards a more realistic appraisal. Two attempts to define landed-fiefs based on an analysis of existing fief systems have been made to date.

3) The figure most commonly used for the number of Han retaining the landed-fief system is 16 to 17% by the last decade of the 17th Century (Kanai Madoka 金井 眞 『藩制成立期の研究』 (吉川弘文館、1975年、15頁、第1表)). A more faithful recompilation of the source for this figure made by Fujii Jōji is given in the table below 藤井 譲二 「幕藩制領主論」 (『日本史研究』 139-140, 1974年、161頁) . The two types of landed-fief in the table below (「地方」・「地方幾成」) together amount to 14.8% of all domains.

表II

	数		知行高	
	実数	%	実数	%
地方	21	8.6	5,414,850	29.4
地方幾成	15	6.2	3,107,900	16.9
俸禄	197	81.0	9,751,322	53.0
不明	10	4.1	131,020	0.7
計	243	100	18,405,092	100.0

(元禄年間始めごろ『土芥寇讐記』による)

Morris (1988) focused on collecting nengu 年貢 (and the various supplementary services) as the distinguishing feature of a viable landed-fief system. In Morris's argument, a fief-holder's right to the fief sprang from the act of enfeoffment by the granter of the fief. This is a statement of the obvious, but it also draws attention to the fact that the legal basis for the fief-holder's control over the fief existed within a larger framework or hierarchy of rule. As legal entities, landed-fiefs did not exist in opposition to higher authority, but were its creation, and therefore the rights of such fief-holders existed as a sub-set of the creating authority. Moreover, collecting nengu meant that the fief-holder thereby incurred responsibility for the welfare of the cultivator(s) of his fief-land, entering into a contract of mutual obligation and responsibility of the sort that marked seigneurial rule generally in the Tokugawa State. Within this general definition of landed-fiefs, Morris distinguishes three categories of fiefs. These were: (1) "special fiefs" where the holder was entrusted with some of the higher powers of public authority in addition to the right to collect nengu, (2) "ordinary fiefs" where the holder was essentially entrusted with collecting nengu, and (3) fiefs granted to the holder without any cultivator attached to the land, and which the holder was expected to cultivate himself. These three types of fiefs were granted in correspondence with the status of the holder: type (1) special fiefs were restricted to high-ranking daimyo vassals, while type (3) fiefs were granted to low-ranking retainers and rear-vassals. Thus in Morris's formulation, the rights of the fief-holder were related to the relative status of that person within the overall status hierarchy.⁴

Takano (1995) bases his definition of *kyūnin ryōshū* (給人領主) on the larger daimyo retainers who retained rights of administration and jurisdiction as well tax collection over their fiefs. In Takano's opinion, these larger fief-holders should be considered to represent the defining standard for daimyo retainers, because their powers of rule both came closer to representing the daimyo model, and because they were in a position to conduct the traditional religious rites deemed necessary to support agricultural activities. These rites date back to the Ritsuryō Code of Ancient Japan, and were carried on as the *sankajō* 三ヶ条吉書 conducted by the Kamakura and Muromachi Bakufu, and by the local lords (在地領主) of these two periods.

These two attempts to redefine landed-fiefs are complementary, despite initial appearances to the contrary. Takano does not intend to imply that fief-holders who did not hold powers other than the right to collect nengu are insignificant: his emphasis on the fact that there were daimyo retainers who did exercise rights other than tax collection is to highlight that such fief-holders could and did exist within the Bakufu System. In Takano's opinion, this form of fief-holding by larger retainers represented the ideal rather than the average form of fief-holding. Takano's argument is also important in pointing towards sources of legitimacy based in traditional ideas about the

4) High-ranking vassals did not simply hold larger fiefs; they could serve as substitutes for the daimyo himself in performing service for the Bakufu when the daimyo was incapacitated, received court titles, and were allowed audiences with the Shogun (e.g. Sendai Han). This kind of large vassal should be seen as constituting part of the 御公儀 of their han. On the other hand, granting fiefs to footsoldiers (徒士) and ashigaru (足輕) without a cultivator attached to the land given is commonly understood as meaning that the fief-holder cultivated the fief himself. In reality, the fief-holder may have rented the land out to peasants, but in this case he collected rent under a private contract, and not as nengu, which is a public not a private duty. Granting land without a cultivator meant that these fief-holders of lower status were excluded from exercising the public right of collecting nengu.

obligations beholding a "lord," independent of any deed of superior authority towards the fief-holder. On the other hand, since Morris defines collecting nengu as involving the obligation to support the cultivator of fief land, this suggests that even those smaller fief-holders who did not have the resources that Takano's *kyūnin ryōshū* had available to them to provide both material and spiritual support, in principle at least incurred a duty to provide the material support necessary for their cultivators to avoid being driven off their land. This is a less ethereal way of suggesting the social basis of legitimacy for fief rule that Takano argues for in his emphasis on the ritual aspects of legitimate rule. Both scholars agree that whatever was the formal legal definition of the content of any particular fief, there was a large element of case-by-case negotiation between fief-holder and cultivators in determining the actual content of what transpired on the fief.

One other aspect of Takano's formulation of landed-fiefs is his emphasis on the role of the fief as providing the material basis for supporting the *ie* (家、イエ) = patrimony (?) of daimyo retainers. This is a rather complicated concept. At the most basic level, the fief provided income for the holder and his household. However, this income was not realised in simply economic terms. The *ie* of the fief-holder extended to include not only the immediate family of the fief-holder and his vassals, but also the commoners resident on the fief and the physical attributes of the fief, including the produce of the area. In Takano's studies of large fief-holders in Saga Han, *Kyūshū*, this communality was expressed in a regular cycle of ritual covering both the annual cycle of the seasons, and the life cycle of the fief-holder. This cycle of ritual differed for vassals of the fief-holder and for commoners, but at important points throughout the annual ritual cycle the fief-holder and his vassals participated with the commoners on the fief in praying for good harvests, and celebrating the fruits thereof.

Furthermore, focusing on the fief and its role in supporting the *ie* of the holder leads into another aspect of landed-fiefs that has been neglected to date, i.e. what was the defining characteristic of a samurai in the Tokugawa Period that separated a samurai from other lower-ranking members of bushi status. A textbook answer to this question would focus on such aspects as whether the person in question was allowed to wear two swords, use a surname, and other external signs of samurai status. For contemporary thinkers such as Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠, Dazai Shundai 太宰春台, and Fujita Tōko 藤田東湖, though, in addition to these visible signs, a "true" samurai was a person who received land in fief and collected nengu; any other samurai was not to be properly trusted (Takano 1996, p. 330-1). The concern of contemporaries with maintaining some kind of link between samurai and "rule" of the land suggests why in many domains the system of allotting lands and cultivators to daimyo retainers was maintained despite the fact that these retainers no longer actually collected their own nengu from these nominal fiefs. Early postwar scholarship under the influence of Ito Tasaburō 伊東多三郎 saw a clear trend in 17th century Japanese history towards the abolition of landed-fiefs and the adoption of stipends (俸禄制) instead of landed-fiefs. However, in retrospect, what is striking about the Tokugawa fief system is not just that the rights of rule over fiefs held by daimyo retainers were markedly reduced (if not totally eliminated) in many han in the first half of the 17th century, but that despite the clear trend towards curtailment of rights of rule, many han still clung to the outward forms of a landed-fief system. Not only did landed-fiefs not disappear in some han, but in other han considerable attention was devoted to maintaining the appearances of the system despite the fact that it no longer served any obvious purpose. This seeming irrationality in clinging to what to all intents and purposes had become a paper formality in many domains needs to be understood in terms of what these fiefs meant to contemporaries, as being

one of the hallmarks of a “true” samurai. The central importance of the landed-fief in defining the samurai self-image helps explain why some han did not abolish the system landed-fiefs, and why many others insisted in maintaining the appearances of a landed-fief system even though fief-holders did not collect any dues from their fiefs. Despite the interpretative importance given by scholars to the stipend system as the evolutionary successor to the landed-fief, for contemporaries, a stipend was simply a sign of inferior status, and definitely not a step up any evolutionary ladder. It has long been recognised that there is no clear dividing line between landed-fiefs and nominal fiefs (蔵米知行) and that they represent a continuum on a sliding scale of degrees (Suzuki Hisashi 鈴木壽). To date, scholars have tended to emphasise nominal fiefs as representing the more important part of this sliding scale, but the very fact that nominal fief systems could not do away with the residual aspects of landed fiefs (parceling out land and/or cultivators when awarding fiefs) suggests that the significance of the ideal of ruling a fief outweighed the actual realities of Tokugawa seigneurial landholding.

Our attempt to define landed-fiefs has been rather self-defeating, so far as arriving at a precise definition which enables us to move on to analysis of specific problems. Perhaps the most productive way to handle this state of affairs to accept this vagueness as part of the definition. Replacing the old sterile and limiting definition of an ideal type of “feudal lord” as representing the only meaningful type of fief with another limited definition will create more problems than it solves. The best compromise is to look for those parameters which mark off the outer limits of the subject.

At the most basic level, a landed-fief is a fief where the deed of enfeoffment (and accompanying supplementary documents) list the actual location of fief land by county, village, and plot of land as marked on the cadastral survey registers, and the nominal cultivator of each plot of land listed. Under this definition, nominal fiefs (蔵米知行) are also landed-fiefs, in intention, if nothing else. The most basic form of a landed-fief system where the holder still retained some meaningful rights of rule would be a system where the holder collected nengu directly from the fief. In this case, the right to “rule” the fief would derive from two sources: the act of investiture of the fief from a higher authority, and from the traditional relationship between ruler and ruled that still continued to persist throughout the Tokugawa Period. This latter source of legitimacy was closely related to the nature of control or “rule” exercised by the fief-holder over the fief being done so within the framework of the *ie* of the fief-holder. To see how this description (rather than definition) of landed-fiefs worked in reality, I would like to take a brief look at some actual examples of different fief systems.

Different types of landed-fiefs

1) Nominalised fiefs:

Okayama Han: Tozama, 315,000 koku, Ikeda Family. a famous case of a nominalised fief system (Taniguchi). From the mid-c17th (承応2年) the han decided the rate of taxation for each village as a unit. Fief-holders only collected nengu from their fief at the rate decided by the han in proportion to their holding in each village (note: they did not collect nengu from the han granaries, but were paid directly by the cultivators). Han assumed responsibility for providing assistance for impoverished and distressed peasants. BUT cultivators within the village were still divided up and assigned to fief-holders as subject to corvée service (諸役). Permission from the fief-holder was

necessary for a "fief" peasant (or family member) to change place of residence to another village. Woodlands could be assigned to fief-holders. Fief-holders could induce the peasants assigned to them to provide loans (Taniguchi p. 99).

This case suggests that despite the weakness of formal control of the fief-holder over the fief, and in particular the fact that the han had assumed responsibility for maintaining the peasants on all fief-land (i.e. the social basis of independent legitimacy for fief rule a la Takano), the very fact of the existence of even nominal formal links (in this case, ^{〆<L>327}百姓分) between fief-holder and peasants could lead to stronger social links forming between the two e.g. loans to the fief-holder. This points out the gap between formal limitations and existing real relationships between ruler and ruled.

Yonezawa Han: Tozama, 150,000 koku, Uesugi Family. Another classic case of a "nominalised" landed-fief system (Hanseishi Kenkyūkai). Notwithstanding, retainers still were able to collect non-rice agricultural products (e.g. vegetable oil, straw) at determined rates from the fief. Peasants badly in arrears in payments of nengu could be forced to provide a "hostage" to pay off the amount due with labour service (Watanabe Fumio).

Suggests the importance of landed-fiefs as providing not just income (rice), but also various items of consumption to support the economy of the fief-holder. Also, large numbers of both direct retainers and rear-vassals in Yonezawa were granted fief land without cultivators. This phenomenon is commonly connected to the history of Yonezawa of suffering being reduced to almost 10% of its original size between 1601 and 1662. There is a need to explain why both the han and its larger retainers did not cut their vassal numbers in accordance with this drastic reduction in holdings.

Kaga Han: Tozama, 1,000,000 koku, Maeda Family. Another classic case of a "nominalised" fief system. Could someone explain how the Maeda managed to implement a landed-fief here in the first place, since the Maeda did not/could not conduct plot-by-plot surveys of their land to begin with. Furthermore, all that has been written about nominalisation of fiefs in Kaga is concerned with questions of the exercise of power and the subsequent restriction of such powers after the implementation of the Kaisakuho 改作法. Could anyone tell us (1) who collected nengu from fief-land, and (2) how the rice collected as such was either passed on to fief-holders, or marketed and the returns of the sales of such passed on, and (3) how the implementation of the Kaisakuho reforms affected this situation?

2) Fiefs with control of both land and cultivator:

Nagoya Han (619,500 koku, Gosanke, Tokugawa) and Nanbu Han (100,000 koku, Tozama, Nanbu Family): Putting these two han together is close to blasphemy, Nanbu Han supposedly representing the most "backward" and "exceptional" part of the dark and benighted Tohoku Region. However, these two fiefs systems have much in common. In particular, in both systems, fief holders not only collected nengu themselves, they also were responsible for drawing up the temple registers 宗門改帳 for the peasants on their fiefs. In both domains, fief-holders exercised more rights over the person of the peasants attached to their fiefs than is usual elsewhere. The legal basis for this control would have been the fact that they drew up the temple registers for their fiefs. These two han also share a similarity in the relationship between the daimyo and his retainers. In both domains, the core of the vassal band was comprised of local warriors who had control of their own local areas prior to the arrival of the daimyo (or the

extension of his rule to their local area). Suggests that the specific form that fief-holding takes is an expression of the relationship between the daimyo and his vassals, as well as between the vassal and the peasants cultivating fief land.

This type of fief in Nagoya and Nanbu is probably different from fiefs where a division of cultivators between fief-holders (百姓分) such as was conducted in Okayama. The important distinguishing feature is who drew up the temple register. That retainers in these two han drew up the registers suggests that they participated in the exercise of powers normally associated with the State's powers of maintaining public order, rather than those powers directly concerned with collection of nengu (Itoji Takayuki 伊藤孝幸, and Morris Chap. 8).

3) Fiefs with control of land alone

Sendai Han, 620,000 koku, Tozama, Date Family. It was from a study of this han that Morris arrived at his division of landed-fiefs into the three categories mentioned above. The right of retainers holding normal type (2) fiefs were essentially restricted to collecting nengu and 諸役 according to a formula set by the han. In type (1) special fiefs, fief-holders exercised a wider variety of rights of control, but these should be properly understood as representing a division of the powers of State rule exercised by the daimyo, rather than a breakdown or malfunction of Han control. Sendai Han is also distinguished by the large number of rear-vassals, many of whom engaged in cultivation of their fiefs. This phenomenon leads to questions as to who was a hyakushoju 百姓 and who was a member of the bushi status group, and who determined who had what status. Looking at the way status was determined and maintained suggests that retainers played an important role in determining this within their fiefs.

Many fiefs in Sendai were either largely or in part composed of land that the fief-holder had reclaimed through opening up waste land 新田開発. This has been understood as due to Sendai having a disproportionately large vassal band like Yonezawa, but this is putting the cart before the horse, as the vassal band actually expanded considerably in the first half of the c17th. This means that the "over-sized" Sendai vassal band grew with the surge in land reclamation, and therefore could not have been the initial cause of this surge. Seigneurial land-holding in Japan is distinguished by the fact that (theoretically) there was no private ownership of land by the ruling class. This meant that all land held by the ruling class was held as a fief granted from a higher authority. This characteristic of seigneurial land-holding provided the basis for the much-purported "concentration" of all land-holding in the hands of the Shogun. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the Shogun himself no more held any private lands than the lowest-ranking samurai, and that the underlying principle that gave the Shogun such wide-ranging powers of control over seigneurial land-holding actually affected the Shogun, himself too. There was only possible exception to this principle, and that was on the part of the lowest -ranking samurai, not the Shogun. The closest thing to privately-held land in Tokugawa Japan was land that the owner had reclaimed, and held either as fief or as a cultivator, 「百姓前」^{ひゃくしょうまえ} in Sendai terminology. One totally unexplored aspect of fiefs in Sendai is the possibility that there was a merging or blurring of the line between private and public holding of land, and that this had an important formative affect on the development of the fief system within this domain.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has been more speculative than analytical, and does not lend itself readily to a neat conclusion or summary. The basic theme should be rather self-obvious: that if we move beyond a economic-determinist approach to Tokugawa history, and start looking at such themes as the role of status and family systems in shaping the Tokugawa Polity, the role of the State and State authority, the tension between legal (Statist) sources of legitimacy and social sources of the same, then the role of landed-fiefs as playing an important role in determining the basic nature of Tokugawa Period samurai assumes a new importance. There are still a number of related aspects of the problem to which I have not had time to even hint at yet which are inter-connected in important ways with the nature of the Tokugawa samurai and land-holding. Rather than further confuse the issue, I will leave these until a later date.

This brief outline of landed-fiefs will probably not convince most of you the need to start revising your general introduction to Tokugawa Japan courses. At best I hope that it may help to make you a little more receptive to alternative approaches to analysing the power structures of the Tokugawa Polity, and the logic informing these structures.

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